

**STANFORD**

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Stanford University Medical Center

DEPARTMENT OF STRUCTURAL BIOLOGY

10 January 2002

To whom it may concern:

The following is a comment on the proposed settlement in the United States vs. Microsoft case.

The intent of our statement is to bolster the comments of the alternative software camps, such as the Open Source Movement, the Free Software Foundation, Linux, the Samba group, et. al. We wish to support the issues and suggestions that these groups will present to this court.

We are scientists who use computers to investigate fundamental questions of molecular biology. In our work we use a wide range of computers and operating systems. However, the overwhelming majority of our experiments are done on UNIX operating systems, such as Linux, IBM's AIX, Compaq's Tru64 and SGI's Irix. Linux clusters are the workhorses of our research. Using Microsoft products to crunch genetic codes would not be a question of cost, it would simply be impossible. Microsoft and Microsoft products severely restrict the users' ability to access low-level system functions necessary to develop large- scale scientific applications. These restrictions are completely understandable from a business perspective, and we are not expecting the situation to change. Microsoft Windows and Microsoft products are targeted to businesses and consumers, and not to a relatively narrow but important community of scientists who crunch numbers and run molecular and genetic simulations. Our needs are met very well by the proprietary Unix variants, as well as by a vast collection of programs copyrighted under the Gnu Public License and its related variants.

We are worried, however, that in its quest for dominance in new and emerging markets, Microsoft will severely endanger the very survival of the solutions mentioned in the preceding paragraph. If our tools are forced out of existence through increasing isolation and propriatorization of standards, we will have no replacement, and science will be greatly harmed as a result. Our case quite different from, say, Microsoft Word displacing WordPerfect as the dominant word processor with help of superior programming or better business marketing. The issue that Open Source software should be protected by the First Amendment (although an important one) is not entirely on point to this litigation. In this comment we would like to point out that some of Microsoft's business practices can and will degrade the ability of alternate software solutions to communicate with each other and with the vast majority of the worlds computers running Microsoft Windows. We are especially concerned with the continuing ability for different computer systems to coexist and share resources, such as file systems, Internet protocols, printing, programming languages, data formats.

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We do not know which of the possible outcomes of this lawsuit will serve the scientific community best. We simply want to remind the court to consider our interests in any remedy that it shall prescribe.

This statement is not intended to list the exact technical issues that would threaten the software solutions that are important to our research. Rather, we request that the court listen to suggestions from the following groups on the settlement:

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| Free Software Foundation | http://www.fsf.org | Samba Group | http://www.samba.org |
| IBM Corporation | http://www.ibm.com | SGI (Silicon Graphics) | http://www.sgi.com |
| Red Hat Corp. | http://www.redhat.com | SuSE | |
| | http://www.suse.com | | |

Sincerely,

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